

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
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Governor

Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food
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Commissioner

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From Your Commissioner...

Strict Laws Give Equines Extra Wintertime Protection

As soon as the weather turns colder NHDAMF's Division of Animal Industry starts to receive calls complaining about horses seen outdoors in a pasture or paddock. The callers will allege the animals are suffering and that the owners need to be forced to move the critters indoors out of the wind and snow.

So many of these calls come in that the Division requires such citizen complaints to be put in writing, although it will accept telephoned reports from local or state police. Whichever, the Division is required by statute to investigate, and that means the state veterinarian or one of our veterinary technicians drives out to take a look.

All animal species are covered by state law prohibiting cruel treatment and inadequate housing and nutrition, but with horses the laws go much further by specifying what constitutes proper care and housing.

These requirements stipulate that horses get regular foot care every eight to 12 weeks, and dental care according to a veterinarian's recommendation. For shelter between Nov 1 and April 15 owners must provide space that is structurally sound and in good repair; adequately ventilated; have natural light; be bedded with dry material; and afford sufficient space for the animal to move about.

Administrative rules adopted under RSA 435 further dictate the minimum size for stall spaces and three-sided pasture shelters, along with provision for daily exercise.

The rules go on to require equines be provided decent hay, grain and fresh water.

If warranted, owners get warnings and recommendations for corrective action on the first visit by an investigator. Subsequent violations can result in court proceedings and seizure of the animals if probable cause is found.

The law grants horse cruelty investigative power to the state veterinarian and to any veterinarian licensed to practice in the state.

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Lorraine Stuart Merrill, Stratham dairy farmer and nationally recognized agricultural journalist, has been named a Food & Society Policy Fellow by the Iowa-based Thomas Jefferson Agricultural Institute. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation underwrites the two-year fellowship program, which this year includes nine individuals drawn from academic, public policy and media fields.

Merrill will continue her writing work while joining other fellows in addressing "issues and challenges associated with a more healthy, just and sustainable food and agriculture system in the U.S. today," according to a release from the Jefferson Institute.

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I drive an hour and 10 minutes each way to work every day, and there are more and more people just like me across the country traveling long distances from home to job.

A new study by the Brookings Institution in Washington finds that “exurbs”—areas on the far fringes of metropolitan areas—are growing at a rapid pace, and many who live in them are folks willing to put up with a commute of an hour or more in order to enjoy a rural lifestyle at home.

The proper definition of an exurb is a community where at least 20 percent of workers travel to an urban area to work, where housing density is low and where population growth in recent years has been relatively high. Exurban population grew 31 percent in the 1990s, far exceeding growth rates of the metro areas around which they exist.

We can certainly see this phenomenon here in New Hampshire, where thousands trek southward to jobs in Massachusetts every morning and then come home to enjoy the attributes of communities that still have a rural feel to many of these residents. Even in my home territory in the Connecticut Valley region I’m always amazed at the number of people commuting 60 or 70 miles one way to good jobs at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center or the many technology outfits around Lebanon and Hanover.

Well, I shouldn’t be amazed, actually. Those folks love being surrounded by fields and pastures and woods just as much as I do.

Steve Taylor, Commissioner